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**UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

**BUSINESS SCHOOL**

**FINAL THESIS REPORT**

**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION RESEARCH:**

**Two English taught programs at Sedu**

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Degree Programme in International Business

November 2010

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**Degree Programme:** International Business

**Title of the Thesis:** Customer satisfaction research: Two English taught programs at Sedu

**Month and Year:** November 2010

**Supervisor:** Markku Lampi **Number of pages:**48+8

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to find out the level of customer satisfaction in two recently launched study programs at Seinäjoki Vocational Education Centre Sedu. In addition, the aim was also to find the most suitable marketing medium for the programs.

The theoretical part consists of customer satisfaction, customer value, customer retention and different research methods. Quantitative- and qualitative approaches are also discussed thoroughly.

The research revealed that the students are overall satisfied with the programs although some black spots were identified. The results of the questionnaire survey can be found from chapter 4.

Open-ended question revealed some unexpected suggestions and issues. The exact answers can be found from the appendix. The authors suggestion for improvement can be found at the end of this thesis.

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**Keywords:** Customer satisfaction, Marketing research, Education, Quantitative research

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Sedu

“Sedu” is a multidisciplinary Vocational Education Centre located in Southern Ostrobothnia. Sedu is a public institution which offers secondary education and is maintained by Seinäjoki Educational Federation of Municipalities. It currently offers 7 different study fields with 26 basic degrees and some 45 training programs in those. Altogether, there are around 4300 students and over 500 staff members in Sedu.

There are three special educational tasks assigned for Sedu. Sedu must organize courses that prepare immigrants for studies that lead to vocational qualification; arrange English taught study programs in Practical Nursing and Electrical and Automation Technology and organize vocational education for athletes. These tasks are given in Regulation of Vocational education.

Sedu defines itself as:

- Significant national educational institute and international actor.
- Attractive study place from where eminent people qualify from.
- Desired workplace that promotes well-being and which enhances its operations in accordance with new challenges.
- Active in networking and strong regional actor ([www.sedu.fi](http://www.sedu.fi)

5.11.2010).

## 1.2 Aims of the research

Sedu recently launched its two first partially English taught programs, Electrical and Automation Installation program and Practical Nursing program. As both of these are “pilot” programs in Sedu, the institution hasn’t acquired past knowledge aka secondary data about the subject.

The main goal was to find out the current level of satisfaction in both of the programs concerning factors such as the level of education and how the expectations have been met. Then to compare the results and figure out what kind of things cause dissatisfaction; and finally provide ideas for improvement.

The secondary objective was more of a marketing point of view. Sedu had difficulties in finding right marketing channels for the programs this study is about, and therefore there were much less students applying than desired. The goal here was to find out from where the students now enrolled had found out about the programs and thus they have ideas for better marketing channels.

This study was conducted to get an overview of the current level of satisfaction and to provide information for the upcoming marketing efforts. Therefore, this thesis could give a good basis for the future research.

### **1.3 Limitations of the research**

The research was limited to all of the students in both electrical and automation technology and practical nursing programs that had begun their studies in August 2010. There were 11 students in Electrical and Automation Installation program and 9 in Practical Nursing of which 10 and 8 answered, respectively. This led to an answer rate of 90, 9% in Electric and Automation Installers program and 88, 8% in Practical Nursing, which can be considered as very good. As there were no previous studies about the subject the questionnaire had to be widespread more than concentrating in certain issues only.

## **2 CLIENTS**

### **2.1 Customer Satisfaction**

The following chapter will define customer satisfaction and its importance to an organization more thoroughly. For the record, customers could also be referred as “clients” as this research is about a non-profit organization ([www.managementhelp.org](http://www.managementhelp.org)).

Customer satisfaction can be defined as the difference between customers’ expectations about a product or service and the actual outcome. However, the expectations may differ drastically depending on a customer’s personal values. (Kanuk & Schiffman, 2007)

Nowadays organizations are advised to be more customer-centered (Kreitner, 2001). This means that organizations should devote themselves to customer needs, listen to their customers, learn how to satisfy their customers and how to respond to their customers in most suitable manner.

There are several factors driving the customer satisfaction as seen on Figure 1. Ultimately customer satisfaction leads first into customer loyalty (which will be discussed later in this chapter) and later into financial gains in forms of increased profitability and increased market share.

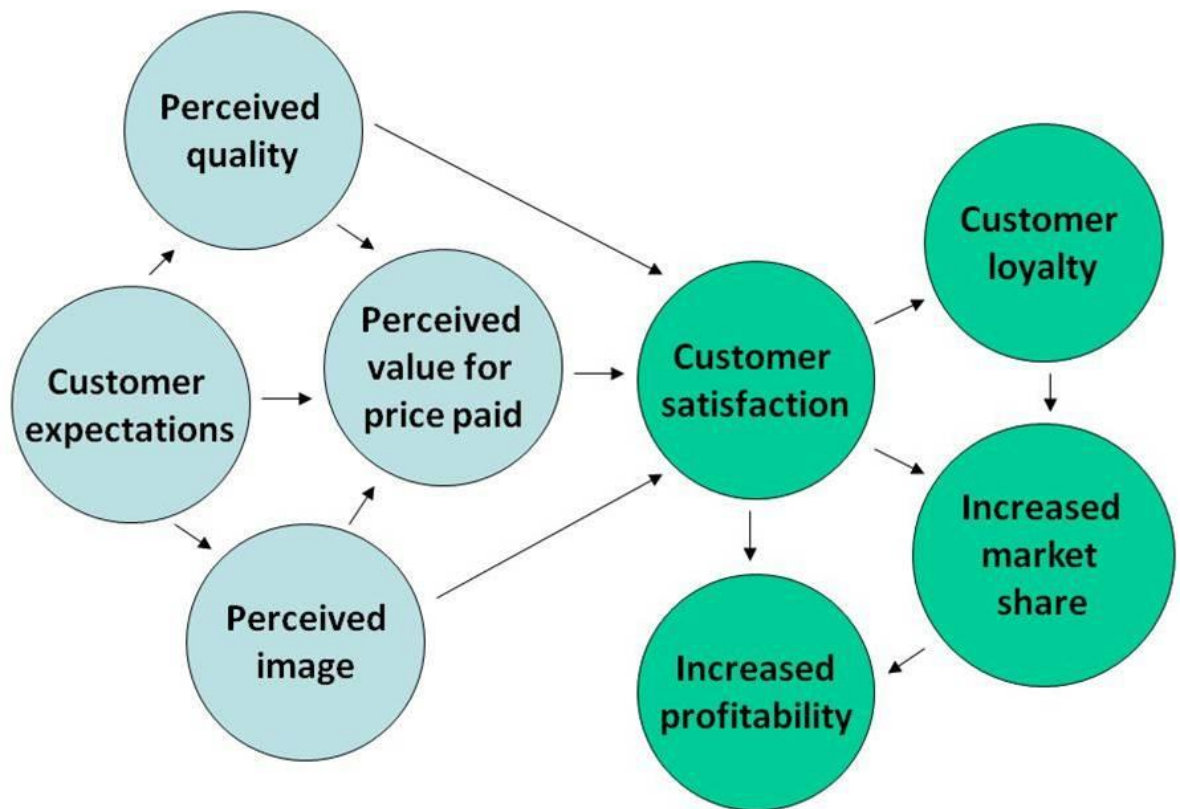


Figure 1. Forces that affect customer satisfaction (<http://www.bmi-t.co.za/drupal/sites/default/files/images/CSpic1.jpg>)

Yi (1990) has identified several types of customer interactions that may alter the definition of “customer satisfaction”:

- satisfaction with a product
- satisfaction with a purchase decision experience
- satisfaction with a performance attribute
- satisfaction with a consumption experience
- satisfaction with a store or institution
- satisfaction with a pre-purchase experience

Different customer types can be divided into following categories (Kanuk & Schiffmann):

Totally satisfied customers; “loyalists” who carry on buying and “apostles” whose purchasing experience is greater than their expectations of the event in question and who also provide positive word-of-mouth publicity to the company. The opposite



customer group to “apostles” is “terrorists” whose purchasing experience has been negative and who do spread negative word of mouth publicity.

“Defectors” are the ones that are somewhat satisfied or neutral towards the services of the company and may as easily quit doing business with it.

Customers who are unhappy but still do business with the company due monopolistic environment (low prices etc.) are called “Hostages”. This customer group is costly to do business with because of the constant complaints.

“Mercenaries” are customers that are real happy but haven’t developed a real loyalty towards the company and are likely to shop somewhere else for cheaper price or on an impulse. This kind of activity violates the rule of satisfaction-loyalty rationale.

As a general rule the researchers suggest that companies should maximize the amount of “Apostles” and correspondingly refrain from having “Terrorists” and “Hostages”. The amount of “Mercenaries” should be cut down too. Companies should also increase the satisfaction level of “Defectors” so that they would turn into “Loyalists”.

Peppers and Rogers (2004), explain that companies may have satisfied customers who do not act loyal to the company and oppositely dissatisfied customers who act as loyal customers to the company. Therefore, it must be noticed that satisfaction itself may not necessarily provide loyalty. According to Gartner Group, it’s plausible for a company to have satisfaction without loyalty but not the other way around. Gartner has also identified factors that can contribute to customer satisfaction as well as loyalty, as seen below:<sup>1</sup>

- Brand. The enterprise image, values, and consistency of the proposition
- Quality. The perceived quality/professionalism of the enterprise, it’s service and products
- Interrelationship. The degree to which customers needs are met, amount of use, dependence, and convenience-all in the context if competitors
- Performance. Service delivery, product reliability, and response times

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Nelson, “If They’re Satisfied, Why are they leaving?” Gartner Group (March 23, 2001)

## 2.2 Customer Value

Customer value can be defined as the difference between the benefits customers receive from a certain product/service and the resources they use to obtain it. The benefits may be functional, economic or psychological and the resources monetary, time and effort used and also psychological. The received value differs from customer to customer so it's subjective. (Kanuk & Schiffman)

Customer value is an intangible asset to the company and it's important to be able to tell the proclivity of the customer buying behavior in the future. In order for a company to allocate their resources better, it may be necessary to categorize their customers by their value to the company. Customers can be divided into following four categories depending on their value to the company:

- “Most valuable customers” (MVCs). Usually in a company the greatest share of customers are MVCs. They are the ones who buy the most, collaborate well and are most loyal. In brief, the MVCs ultimately keep the company in business.
- “Most growable customers” (MGCs). This group has the greatest value still to be realized. Company should try to affect MGCs behavior so that they wouldn't cost that much money to them and so that they would grow to more profitable customers. It's also possible that one company's MGCs are other company's MVCs – that's why these customers are the ones that have the potential to grow.
- “Below-zeros” (BZs). Almost all of the companies have at least a few “Below-zero” customers. They, no matter what company does, don't almost ever generate profit for the company. “Below-Zero” customers are for example the ones that leave the last bills unpaid when changing company they do business with, customers that require lot of attention but don't buy a lot and large enterprises that can tender the prices close to zero margin. There are two options how companies should deal with this kind of customers; to force “Below-Zeros” to move and become unprofitable customers to some other company or impose extra charges for services to move customer from causing costs to at least close to breakeven.
- “Migrators”. These kind of customer hover between being “Below-zero”-, and “MGCs”. Companies should try through their strategy to convert these

customers to become “MGCs” if possible, or at least to make the customer to reveal their true intentions towards the company to be able to identify if the customer will profit the company in the long-run. (Peppers and Rogers)

## 2.3 Customer Retention

Usually it's far more expensive for a company to make new customers than to keep existing ones. This is true because of the following; customers that are loyal to a company purchase more products and are less sensitive towards price. They also care less about competitors advertizing and are cheaper to serve since they already have knowledge about company's products and services in general. Loyal customers do also promote company to their acquaintances by giving out positive word-of-mouth publicity. In addition, it's really expensive to get new customers through marketing efforts. This leads to the concept of customer retention. (Kanuk & Schiffman))

Customer retention can be defined in two different ways (Shajahan, 2004). The definition alters because some products aren't bought as often others, which makes it difficult for a company to keep track on their customer retention. For example, even thou customer would always buy his low-purchase-frequency product from a same company, the company may have difficulties in deciding whether this customer increases their customer retention or not. These factors lead to the following definitions for customer retention:

1. Applicable for products that are bought often: customer buys a certain product/service from the same company over a given period of time.
2. Applicable for products that are bought seldom: customer makes it clear he's going to buy a certain product/service from the same company at the next point of purchase.

### **3 THE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION RESEARCH**

#### **3.1 Different methods of conducting a customer satisfaction research**

There are various ways in implementing a customer satisfaction research.

Questionnaires, examining secondary sources, observation and interviewing are the most common techniques used. Secondary data examination differs from the other research methods so that it has been drawn in some research before and is usually used as a backup material for other research methods. Primary data on the contrary is collected for a particular research by the author(s) using one or several of the research methods mentioned before. Usually it's good for a research to have both primary and secondary data sources (Lewis, Saunders, and Thornhill, 2003).

Primary data can be qualitative or quantitative in its nature. The main difference is that in qualitative research the sample is usually rather small and the role of the researcher is “insider”; in quantitative research the sample is wide and the researcher is “outsider”. In qualitative research the results are subjective and need to be interpreted; as in quantitative research the results are statistical and objective. Table 1 displays the differences more precise.

<b>Quantitative Mode</b>	<b>Qualitative mode</b>
<b>Assumptions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social facts have an objective reality</li> <li>• Primacy of method</li> <li>• Variables can be identified and relationships measured</li> <li>• Etic (outside's point of view)</li> </ul>	<b>Assumptions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reality is socially constructed</li> <li>• Primacy of subject matter</li> <li>• Variables are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure</li> <li>• Emic (insider's point of view)</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generalizability</li> <li>• Prediction</li> <li>• Causal explanations</li> </ul>	<b>Purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextualization</li> <li>• Interpretation</li> <li>• Understanding actors' perspectives</li> </ul>
<b>Approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begins with hypotheses and theories</li> <li>• Manipulation and control</li> <li>• Uses formal instruments</li> <li>• Experimentation</li> <li>• Deductive</li> <li>• Component analysis</li> <li>• Seeks consensus, the norm</li> <li>• Reduces data to numerical indices</li> <li>• Abstract language in write-up</li> </ul>	<b>Approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ends with hypotheses and grounded theory</li> <li>• Emergence and portrayal</li> <li>• Researcher as instrument</li> <li>• Naturalistic</li> <li>• Inductive</li> <li>• Searches for patterns</li> <li>• Seeks pluralism, complexity</li> <li>• Makes minor use of numerical indices</li> <li>• Descriptive write-up</li> </ul>
<b>Researcher Role</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detachment and impartiality</li> <li>• Objective portrayal</li> </ul>	<b>Researcher Role</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal involvement and partiality</li> <li>• Empathic understanding</li> </ul>

Table 1. Differences between qualitative and quantitative research. (

<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/siegle/research/Qualitative/qualquan.htm> 10.11.2010)

### 3.2 The questionnaire for Sedu

As the sample needed to be large so that the analysis would be reliable quantitative approach was chosen. Also it was decided in cooperation with the representatives of Sedu that the tool used for data gathering will be questionnaire. Actual paper format filled in class hours was chosen over electronic format to get more replies and quicker.

The actual questionnaire consists of foreword and then 13 sections with questions. The format is pretty basic and general, rather than concentrating in some specific issues. It was done so to measure the overall satisfaction level in the pilot programs and to make sure the questionnaire doesn't get too complicated for all the respondents to understand completely.

First five questions are planned to gather some background information from the respondents. The questions include age, previous education, motive to study at the current program and from where found out about the program. These are simple mark with an X questions with the possibility to tick "other" and write in own alternative.

Question 6-7 are also mark with an X questions. Question number six is about the balance between English and Finnish language teaching. Question number seven asks if the students have problems studying in foreign language and the subcategories allow them to tick in which field of the language the problems appears. There's also a text box in which respondents may clarify the exact occasions they encounter these problems.

Section eight contains Likert-rating scale

(<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/scallik.php> 6.11.2010) with ten statements.

Each statement has four options to choose from "Totally disagreeing" to "Totally agreeing". The subjects vary from the quality of teaching and all aspects related to it to satisfaction level in general. As answer can be analyzed in numeric form, an average answer value to each statement can be presented.

Question nine asks about have the earlier expectations been met. If the answer is negative the follow-up question gives the possibility for a respondent to specify why not. Question ten asks if respondents would like to have some additional free-choice courses and what kind of courses those should be. Question 11 is a multi-response tick in question about plans after getting vocational qualification. There are four readymade options and one field for diverging answer.

Question 12 is a two-part open ended question. First part asks about the best things in studies so far and the second part about the worst thing. Question 13 is a last one in questionnaire and it's for additional comments if something hasn't been covered in earlier questions and for feedback in general.

### **3.3 Implementing the Research**

Because the fact that there was two groups following different timetables and studying in different departments of Sedu, the questionnaire was conducted in two different occasions during week 44. The dates were chosen in cooperation with the institution so that there would be as much students present during occasion.

The printed questionnaires were handed out to be filled during class hours. It took approximately 10 minutes to fill and there was a possibility to ask for clarification in case if something was not comprehensible.

After receiving back the filled questionnaires, the raw data was typed into computer. After that the data was analyzed using Tixel-software. This included creating the charts and calculating the averages.

## 4 RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

### 4.1 Background information

#### 4.1.1 Age

In the Electrical and Automation Installer program the majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 16-18 or 25+, 40% equally. Third biggest group was ages 19-21 with 20% of the respondents. No responded was between 22-24 years old.

There was slightly more variation in the Practical Nursing program: majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 25+ with 38% of the respondents. Second biggest groups were ages 16-18 and 19-21, 25% equally. 13% of the respondents were between 22-24 years old. The percentages are illustrated in the chart 1 below.

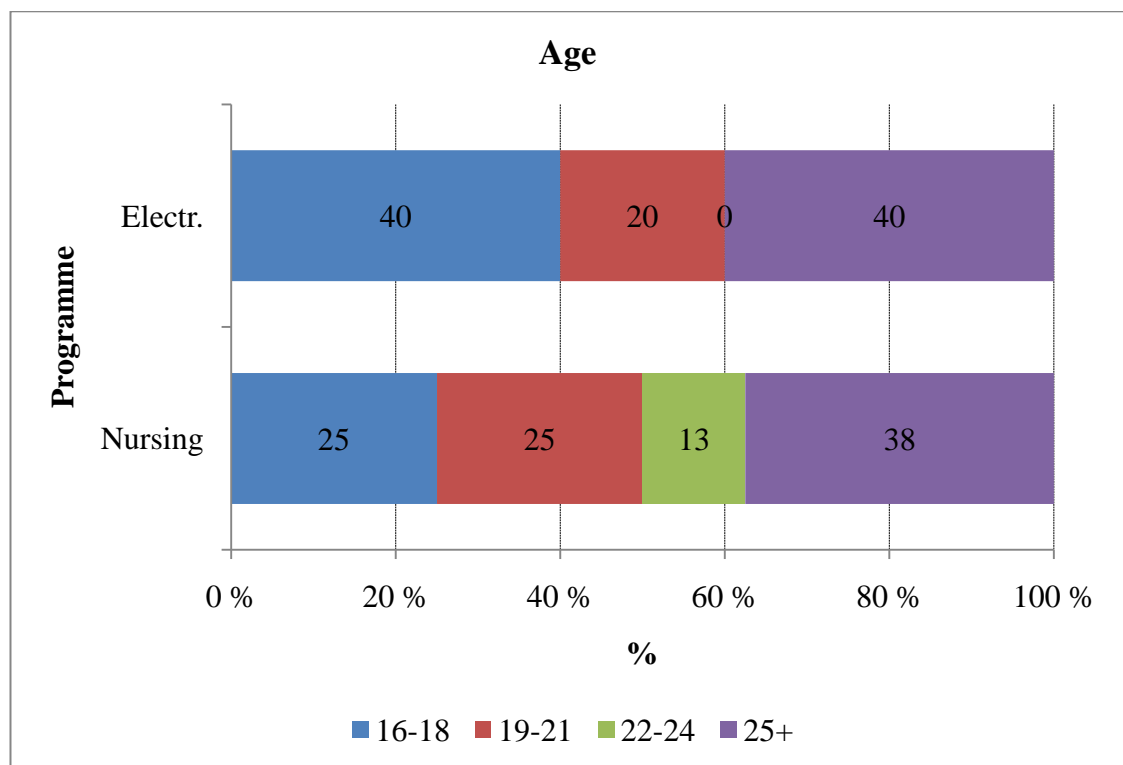


Chart 1. Respondents age



### 4.1.2 Prior education

As seen in chart 2, the majority of respondents in Electrical and Automation Installer program, 60%, had upper secondary school background. The second largest prior education group was comprehensive school with 30% of the respondents. 10% of the respondents had some other background education than included in questionnaire options. These were university-, and polytechnic level studies.

In Practical Nursing program the largest background education group was also upper secondary school, with 38% of the respondents. Second biggest prior education groups were comprehensive school and vocational school, with 25% of the respondents equally. 13% of the respondents had some other background education, which was university of applied sciences.

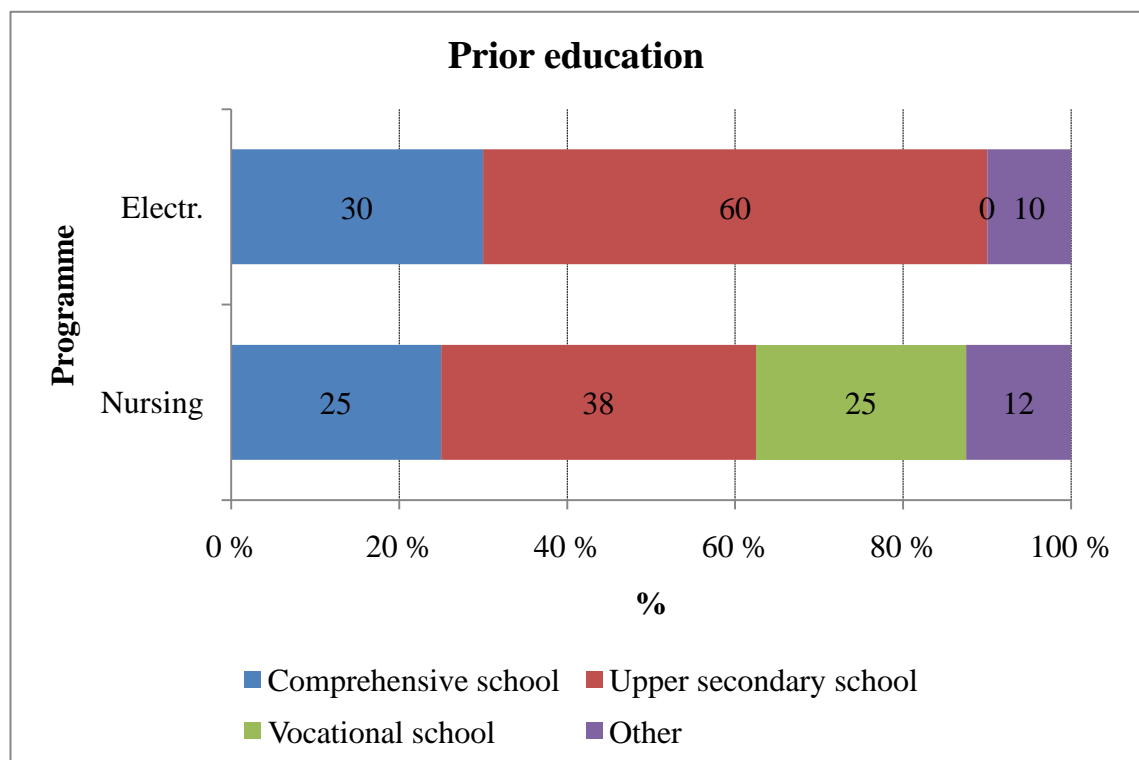


Chart 2. Prior education of the respondents

### 4.1.3 Earlier experience about the subject

Majority of the respondents in Electrical and Automation Installer program had no previous knowledge about the subject as seen in chart 3. 40% had some experience which can be easily related to the previous chart 2 as the fields of experience included mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing which had been gained in prior education.

In Practical Nursing program only 12% of the respondents had some experience about the subject. This experience acquired was about “On-job-learning-period”. This means that the great majority of 88% had none of whatsoever earlier experience about the subject.

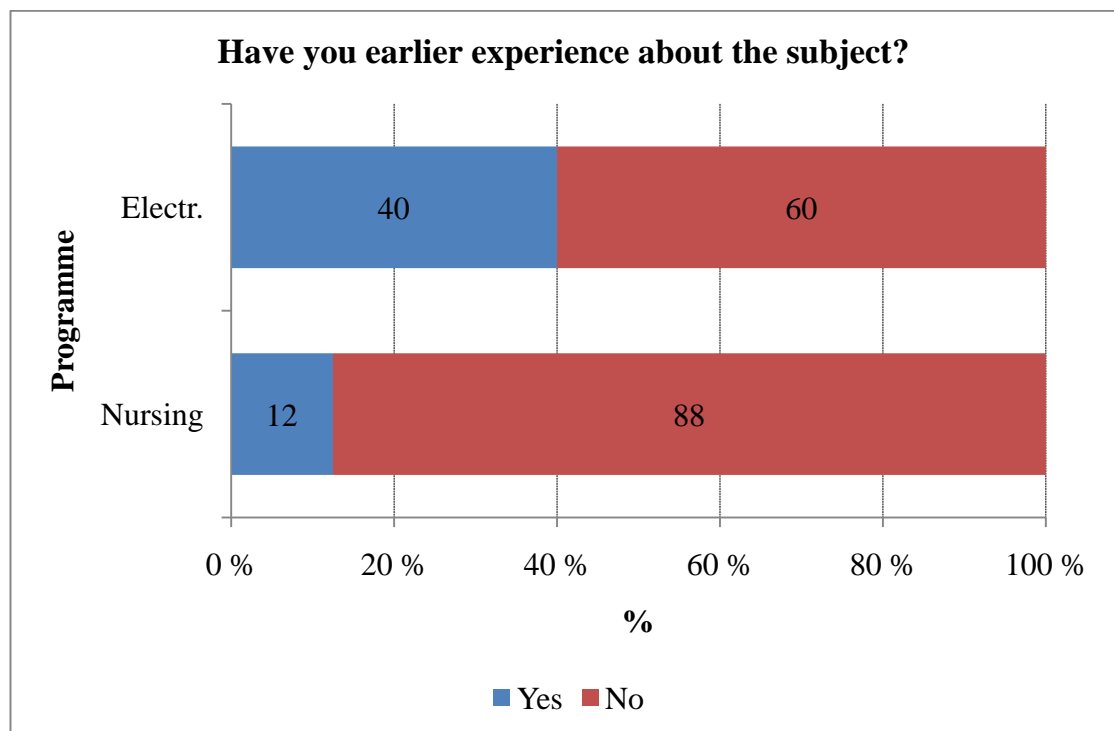


Chart 3. Earlier experience about the subject.

#### 4.1.4 From where did you found out about the program you are now studying?

Question number six showed great variance in both of the programs as seen on chart 4 below. Respondents were able to tick one or more choices depending on the amount of sources they had had. This causes the total sum of the percentages to be over 100%.

In Electrical and Automation Installer program the most popular sources of information were Internet and previous schools guidance counselor. 40% of the respondents had found out about the program from one or both of these sources. 30% had marked friend/acquaintance and 25% advertisement. Advertisement media were newspapers Pohjalainen and Ilkka. Other source for information included parents.

Internet was the main source for information in Practical Nursing program. 75% of the respondents had found out about the program from there. After the Internet, advertisements were the second largest answer group with 38%. The media included school fliers and Ilkka-newspaper. 25% of the respondents had heard about the program from their friends/acquaintances and/or their previous schools guidance counselor. There were no other sources of information.

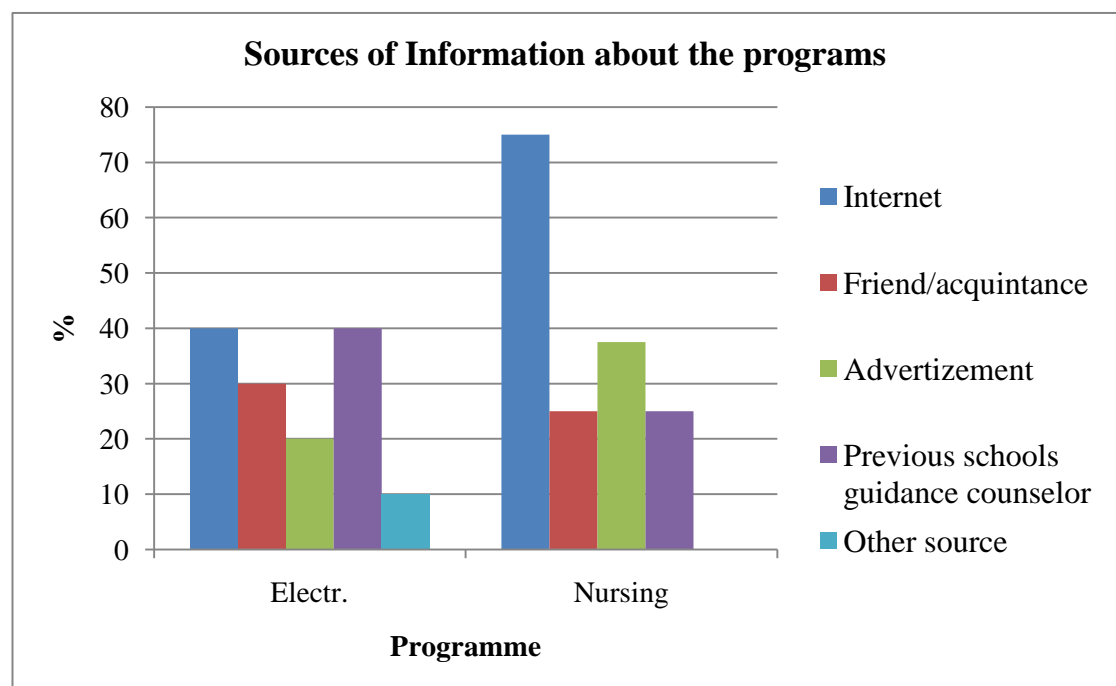


Chart 4. Sources of information about the programs.

### 4.1.5 Main reason to apply

Chart 5 shows that the incentive to apply for the majority of the respondents in Electrical and Automation Installer program was either possibility to study in English or better job prospects for the future, 40% in each category. 20% of the respondents answered interesting subject to be their main reason to apply for their current study program.

In Practical Nursing program the majority of 50% of the respondents thought that possibility to study in English was their main reason to apply. 38% answered that the subject seemed interesting and 12% applied for better job prospects after getting their vocational qualification.

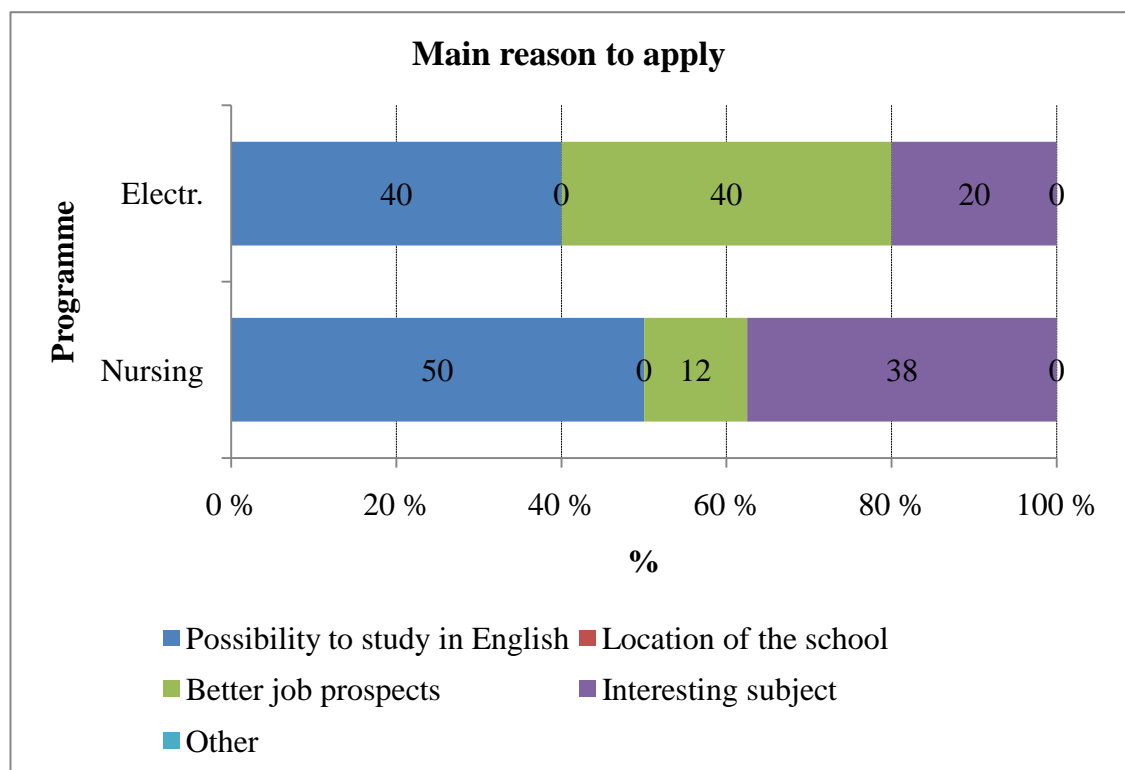


Chart 5. Main reason to apply.

## 4.2 Language related questions

### 4.2.1 Balance between English and Finnish taught lessons

This question section concentrates in the actual teaching language and problems that the respondents may have encountered with it.

As seen in the chart 6 below, the great majority of 70% in Electrical and Automation Installer program thought that the current balance between lecture languages is good. However, 20 requested few more lessons in Finnish language and 10% a lot more lesson in English.

In Practical Nursing 63% felt that the current balance is good. 25% wanted a bit more English language teaching and 13% a lot more lessons in English.

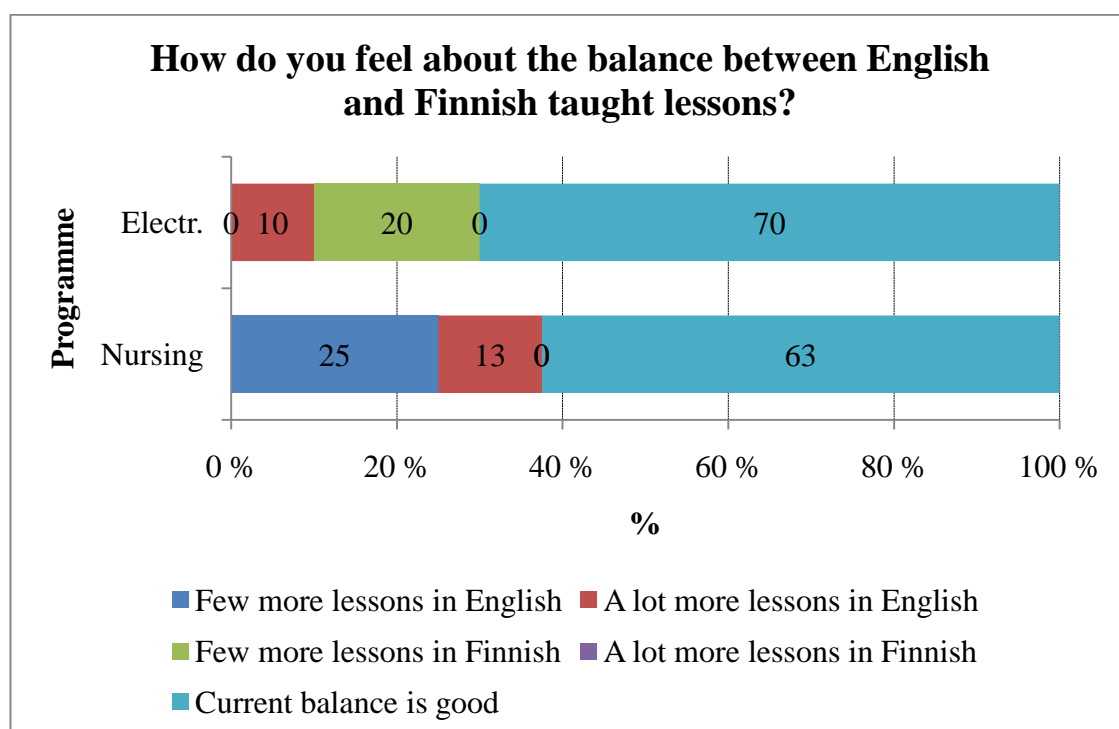


Chart 6. The balance between English and Finnish taught classes

### 4.2.2 Difficulties in studying in English

In question number 9 respondents were able to mark as many subfields they have difficulties in. As the chart 7 shows below, the majority of the respondents in both programs didn't have major problems in studying in English. However, some respondents had faced difficulties.

In Electrical and Automation Installer program 70% had no difficulties at all, but the rest 30% were distributed equally to problems in grammar, vocabulary and speaking. There were no difficulties in writing and in listening-, and in reading comprehension.

In Practical Nursing program the majority of 63% had no problems with the language. 25% of the respondents had encountered difficulties in speaking and 13% in grammar and/or reading, respectively. There were no difficulties in the vocabulary, listening comprehension and writing. As some respondents market more than one subcategory the overall percentage value is over 100.

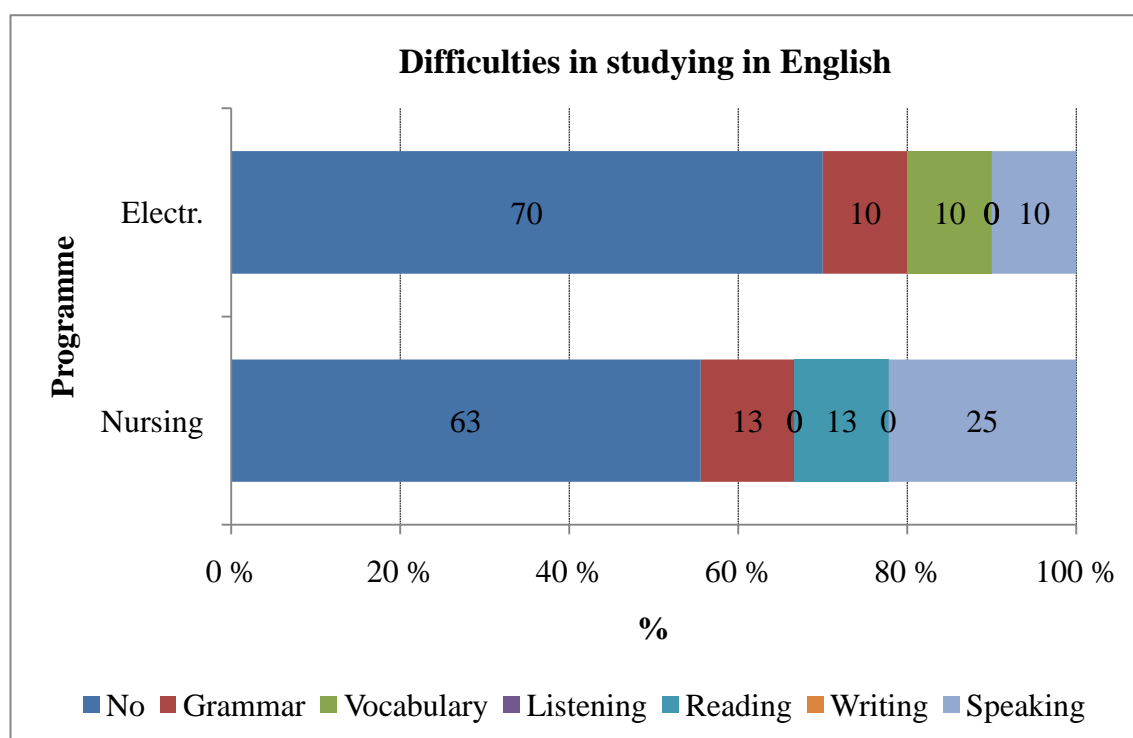


Chart 7. Difficulties in studying in English

## 4.3 Grading the program

### 4.3.1 Level of teaching in Finnish is good

In Electrical and Automation Installers program 80% of the respondents were very satisfied with the level of teaching in Finnish, as illustrated in chart 8. The rest 20% were somewhat satisfied and no one disagreed with the statement. The average was 3, 8.

In Practical Nursing program 62% agreed totally to the statement and 38% partially agreed. No respondent disagreed either. The average score was 3, 6.

This means that majority of the respondents in both respondent groups were extremely happy with the level of teaching in Finnish and the rest fairly happy. It can be concluded that there aren't much need for improvement in Finnish taught courses.

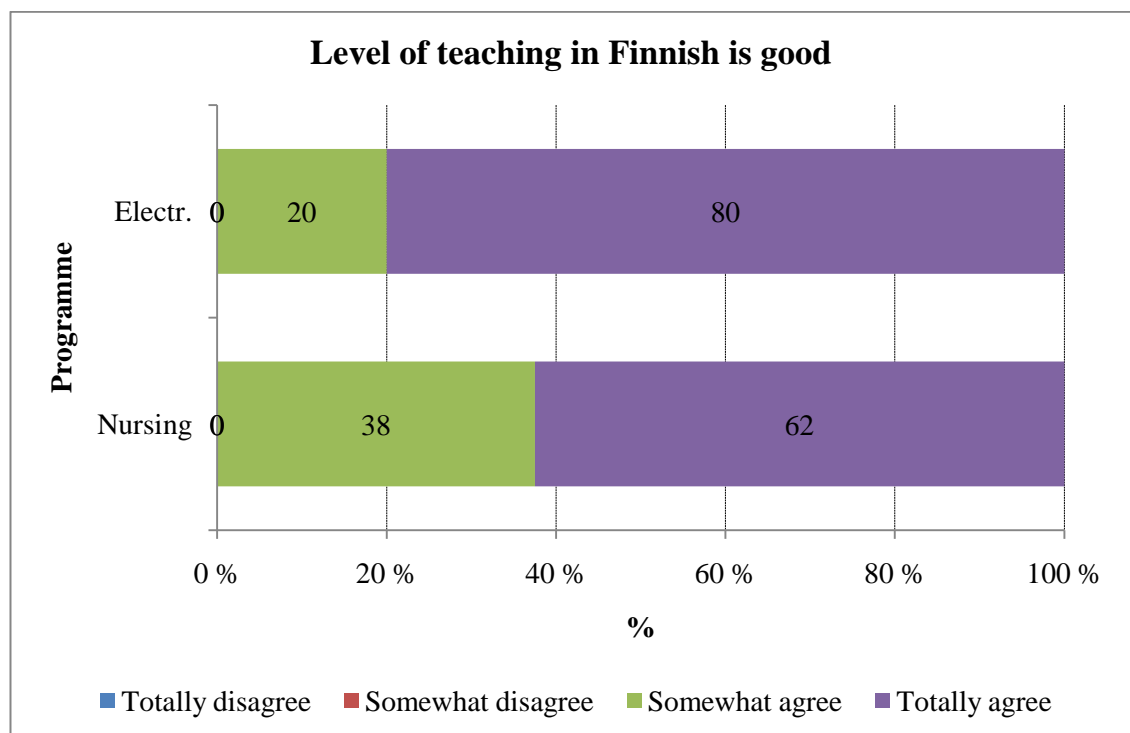


Chart 8. Level of teaching in Finnish

### 4.3.2 Level of teaching in English is good

In Electrical and Automation Installers program 30% of the respondents were very satisfied with the level of teaching in English as seen in chart 9 below. 40% somewhat agreed and 30% slightly disagreed with the statement. The average answer was 3, 0.

In Practical Nursing program the average was 3, 6. 62% of the respondents totally agreed with the statement “Level of teaching in English is good”. The rest 38% somewhat agreed and no one disagreed.

Majority of 70% at least somewhat agreed with the statement in Electric and Automation Installers group. However, this leaves 30% of the respondents slightly unhappy with the teaching in English which means there could be some aspects that need improvement.

In Practical Nursing group the percentages are the exact same as in the previous chart. This means that the respondents are overall satisfied with the level of teaching in English.

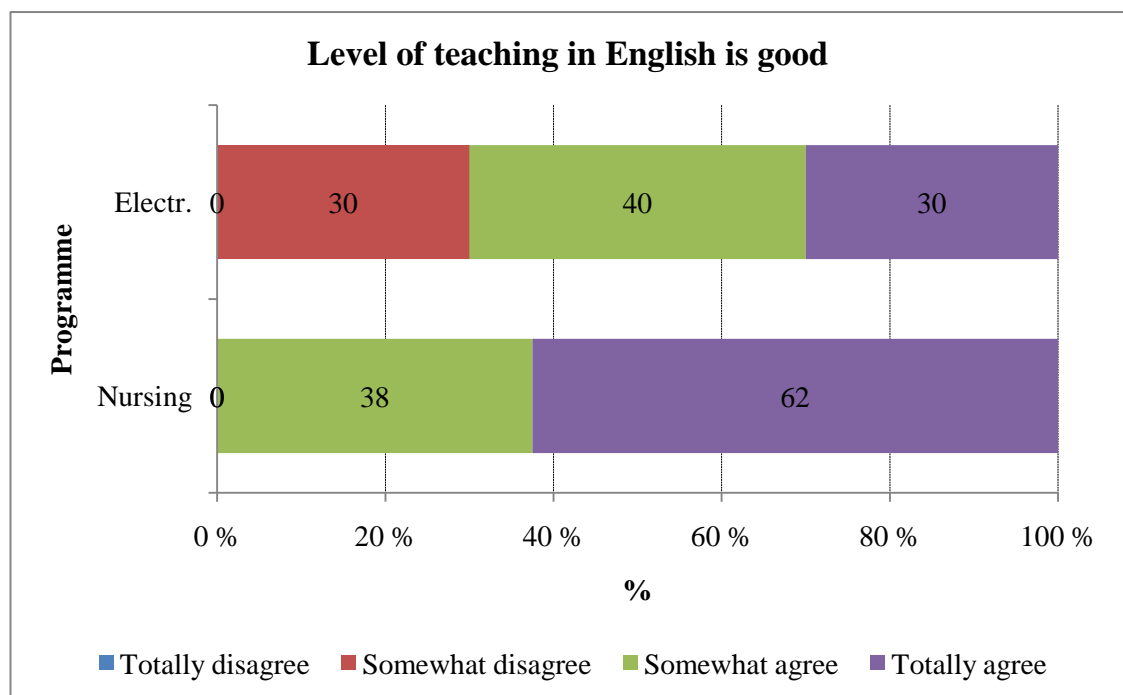




Chart 9. Level of teaching in English

### 4.3.3 Flow of information is sufficient

The statement concerning flow of information showed great variance in both of the groups. In Electrical and Automation Installers program 40% of the respondents either totally agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement equally as illustrated in chart 10. 10% somewhat disagreed and the rest 10% totally disagreed. The average was 3, 1.

In Practical Nursing program 50% of the respondents totally agreed with the statement. 25% somewhat agreed and 25% somewhat disagreed. The average was 3, 3.

Even though great majority of 80% in the Electrical and Automation Installer program somewhat or totally agreed with the statement, the rest 20% were slightly or extremely dissatisfied with the flow of information

75% of the respondents in Practical Nursing program were satisfied with the flow of information. However 25% were slightly dissatisfied which means that there may be some need for improving the flow of information in both of the programs.

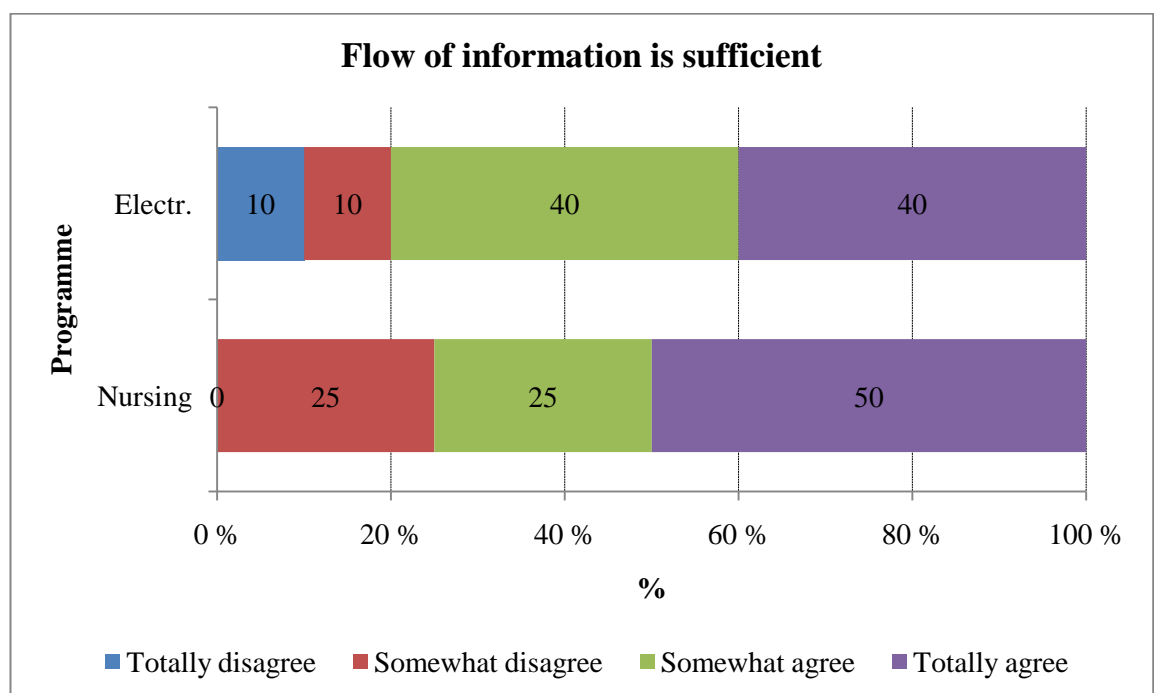


Chart 10. Flow of information.

#### **4.3.4 I get enough feedback about my progress**

Chart 11 shows below that 30% of the respondents in Electrical and Automation Installer program totally agreed with the statement about personal progress feedback. 60% somewhat agreed and 10% totally disagreed. Average for this statement was in Electrical and Automation Installer program was 3, 1.

In Practical Nursing program 74% of the respondents totally agreed with the statement. 13% somewhat agreed and other 13% somewhat disagreed. The average was 3, 6.

Great majority of 90% of the respondents in Electric and Automation Installers group were somewhat or totally satisfied with the amount of feedback they receive concerning their progress. Still, because of the fact that 10% totally disagreed there might be something to improve in the feedback process.

In Practical Nursing respondents are thinking along the same lines as the respondents in the other program; 87% at least somewhat agree with the statement but the rest 13% disagree, which means that the feedback system could also be lightly enhanced in this program.

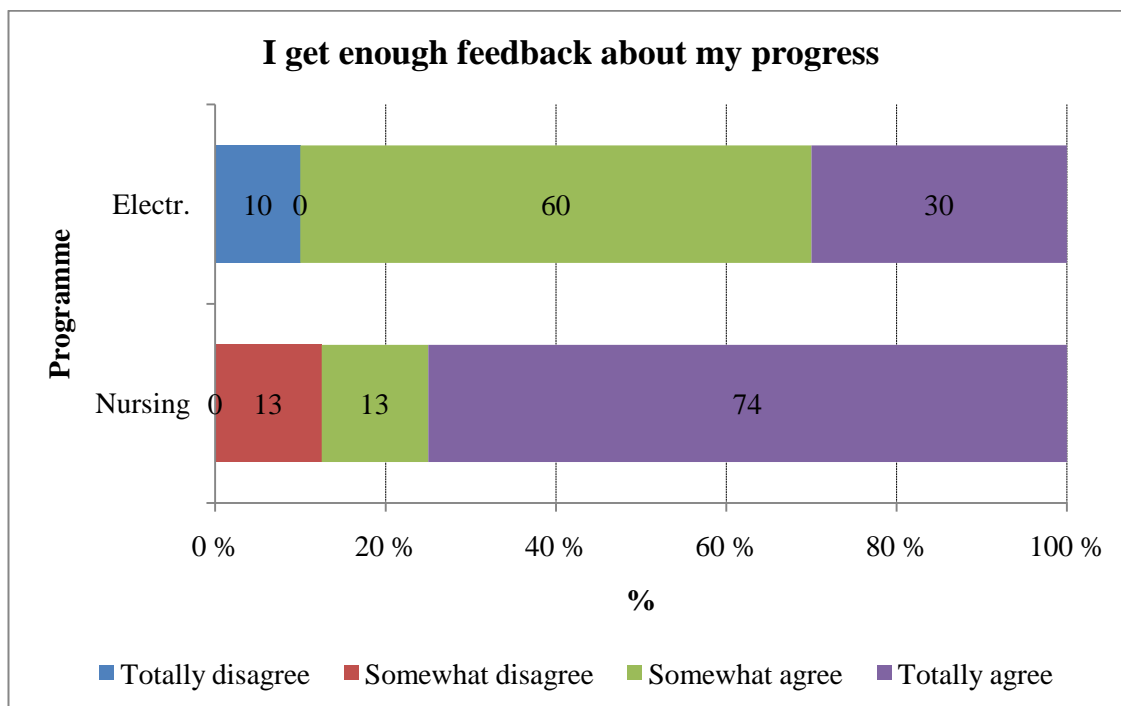


Chart 11. Feedback about progress

#### 4.3.5 Student services in general are well organized

Chart 12 below illustrates how satisfied respondents are with the student services in general. In Electrical and Automation program 50% of the respondents totally agree with the statement and 40% somewhat agree. 10% somewhat disagree. The average was 3, 4.

In Practical nursing program the respondents concur with the statement: 25% agree totally and rest 75% somewhat agree. None of the respondents disagreed with the statement that student services in general are well organized. The average answer value was 3, 3.

The opinion towards student services was very positive in Electric and Automation Installer program. 90% of the respondents were satisfied with the student services. However 10% was slightly unhappy which means there might be something to improve in the field of student services.

In Practical Nursing the respondents seem to be satisfied with the student services in general. So, it can be concluded from the results of the questionnaire analysis that there's no urgent need for improving the student services.

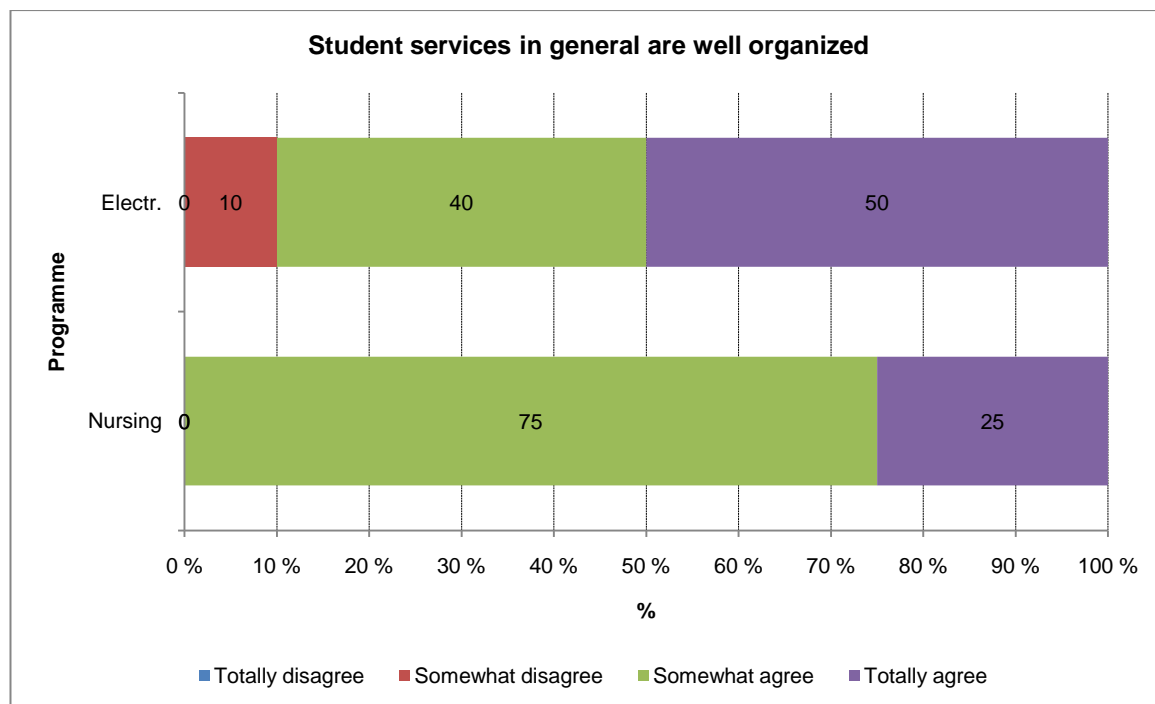


Chart 12. Student services.

#### 4.3.6 Our class spirit is good

The next statement argued about the class spirit as seen in chart 13 as seen below. 40% of the respondents in the Electrical and Automation Installer program totally agreed that their class spirit is good, when 50% somewhat agreed. 10% of the respondents somewhat disagreed. The average for Electrical and Automation program answers was 3, 3.

In Practical Nursing, all the respondents thought that their class spirit is rather good. 12% totally agreed and 88% somewhat agreed. The average in Practical Nursing program was 3, 1.

The overall class spirit was pretty good in both of the programs. All of the respondents in Practical Nursing were at least somewhat satisfied with their current class spirit. 90% of the respondents in the Electrical and Automation Installer group were also somewhat or totally satisfied with the current class spirit, leaving 10% of the respondents in that

group somewhat dissatisfied. It can be concluded that there might be some small adjustments to be made to the class spirit better in this program.

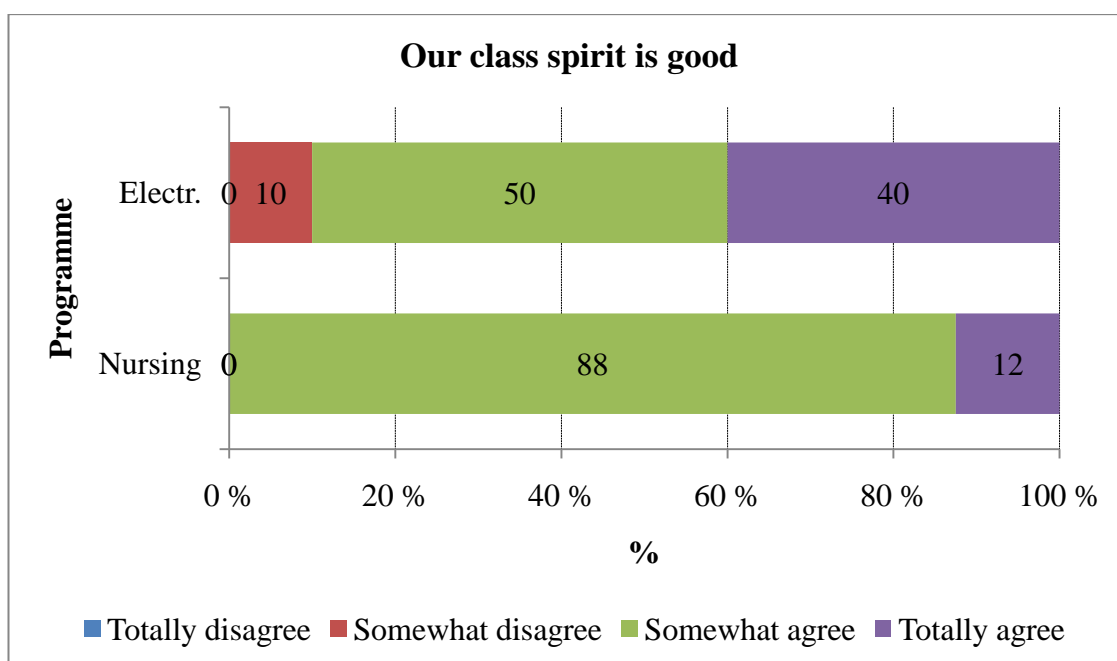


Chart 13. Class spirit.

#### 4.3.7 My starting level was adequately taken into consideration

The next statement questioned if the individual starting level was adequately taken into consideration at the beginning of the programs, and the results can be seen in chart 14 below. In Electrical and Automation Installers program 30% totally agreed and 50% somewhat agreed with the statement, when 20% somewhat disagreed. The average answer value was 3, 1.

In Practical Nursing program 25% of the respondents totally agreed and 63% somewhat agreed with the statement. 12% somewhat disagreed and the average was also 3, 1.

The majority of the respondents in both of the programs were satisfied how the starting level was taken into consideration, 80% in Electric and Automation Installers program and 88% in Practical Nursing program. However, 20% and 12% were dissatisfied, respectively, which gives the impression that some of the respondents have faced difficulties in the beginning of their studies and that in the future groups more attention

should be paid to assess everyone's level of knowledge about certain subjects more thoroughly.

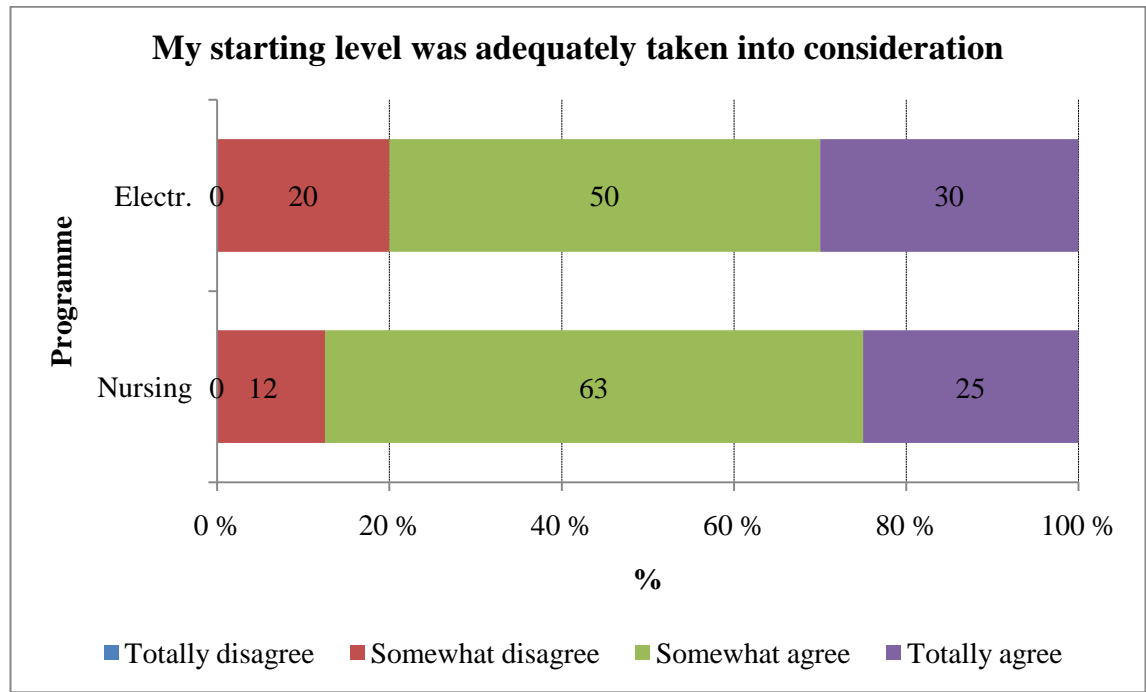


Chart 14. Starting level.

#### 4.3.8 Materials handed out are useful and easily understandable

The next statement concerned the educational material handed out and how useful and understandable respondents perceive it as illustrated in the chart 15. 60% of the respondents in Electrical and Automation Installers program totally agreed that materials indeed are useful and easy to understand. 30% somewhat agreed with the statement and 10% somewhat disagreed, when the average answer value was 3, 5.

In Practical Nursing program 25% agreed with the statement completely. 37, 5% somewhat agreed and the rest 37, 5% somewhat disagreed. The average answer value was 2, 9.

In Electric and Automation Installers program most of, or 90%, of the respondents found the materials handed out good. Only 10% somewhat disagreed with the statement, which gives the impression that materials are indeed useful.

In Practical Nursing 62, 5% of the respondents were somewhat or totally satisfied with the materials handed out. Still 37, 5% disagree with the statement giving the lowest score of the statement-questions so far. The conclusion can be made that there's some improvement to be made to enhance the quality of educational material handed out in this program.

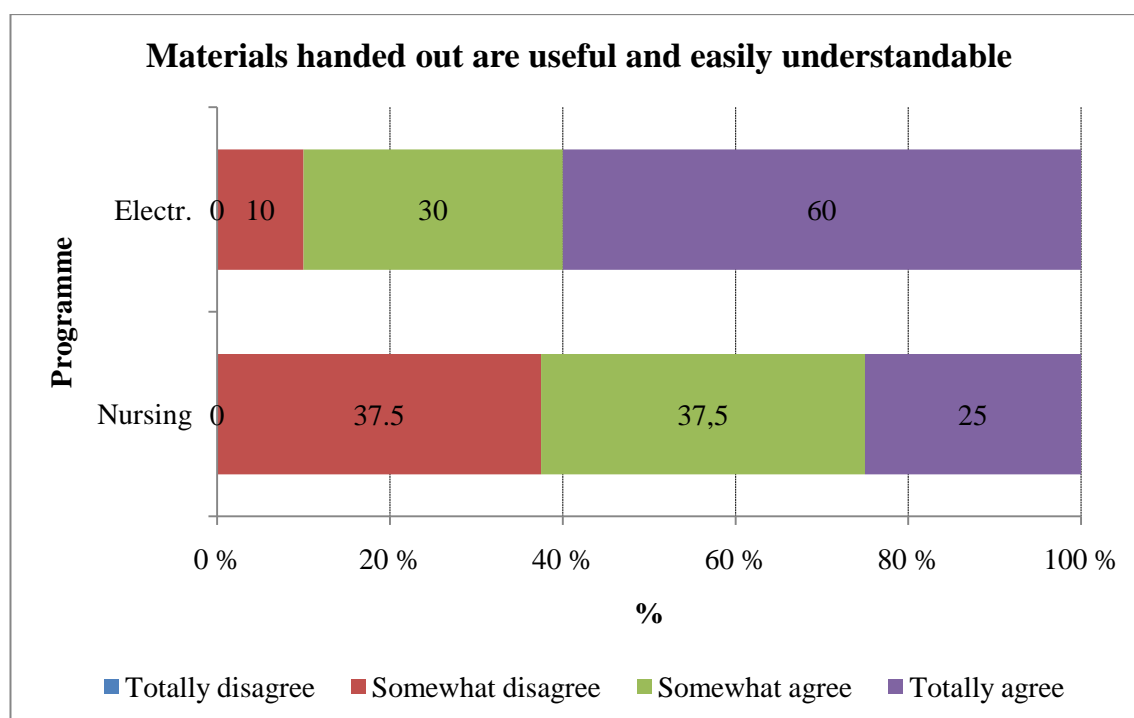


Chart 15. Materials handed out.

#### **4.3.9 I have received enough information how to interact with different cultures**

As both of the programs are partially in English and ultimately prepare respondents to work also abroad, the statement number nine questioned if there's enough information given out concerning cultural differences etc. In Electrical and Automation Installers

program 30% totally agreed that they have received enough information about the topic in hand, 40% somewhat agreed and 30% somewhat disagreed which can be seen in the chart 16 below. The average answer value was 3, 0.

In Practical Nursing both “Totally agree” and “Somewhat agree” got 25% of the answers. 38% somewhat disagreed and 12% totally disagreed, when the average answer value was 2, 6.

In Electric and Automation Installers program majority felt that they have been informed about cultural differences enough. 30% of the respondents were somewhat dissatisfied with the amount of information received.

In Practical Nursing half of the group was somewhat or totally satisfied with the information received. However, the other half somewhat or totally disagreed with the statement.

As the average score was this low, it can be recommended that there should be more education about different cultures and how to interact with those.

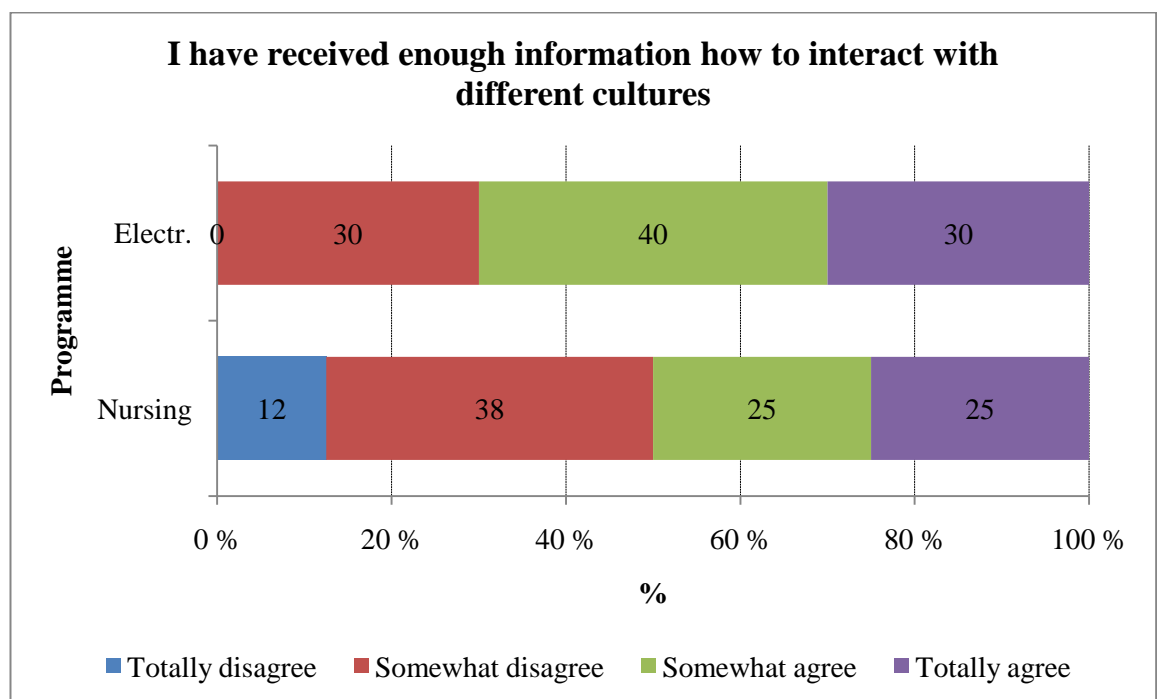


Chart 16. Interaction with different cultures.



#### **4.3.10 In general, I'm satisfied with my current study program**

The last statement-styled question measured the overall satisfaction level of the programs and the results are illustrated in chart 17 below. In Electrical and Automation Installers program the majority of 70% of the respondents answered "Totally agree" indicating that they are satisfied in their current study program in general. 20% somewhat agreed with the statement and 10% somewhat disagreed, giving the average of 3, 6.

In Practical Nursing, the majority of the respondents totally agreed or somewhat agreed; giving the percentage of 37, 5% equally. The rest 25% somewhat disagreed. The average answer value was 3, 1.

Majority of the respondents in both of the programs somewhat or totally agree with the statement admitting that they are satisfied with their program. However, 10% from Electrical and Automation Installers group somewhat disagree and 25% from Practical Nursing group. The result for this statement-styled-question could probably be improved just by taking care of the factors causing dissatisfaction that have been discovered earlier in this chapter.

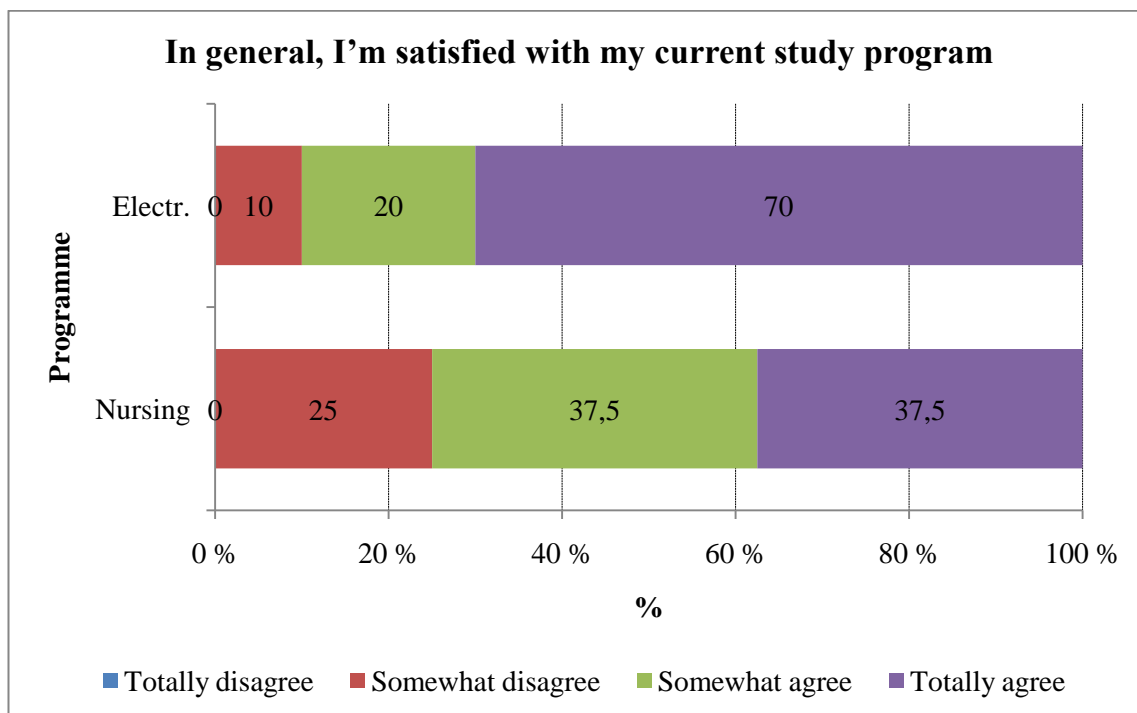


Chart 17. General satisfaction.

#### 4.4 Have your earlier expectations about this study program been met?

Question number nine asked if the respondents' earlier expectations have been met. If the answer was "No" the follow-up question inquired for a further explanation. The great majority of 70% in Electrical and Automation program had their expectations been fulfilled as the rest 30% didn't which can be read from the chart 18 below.

In Practical Nursing program the answers were rather close to the other group; majority of 75% answered that their expectations were realized leaving the rest 25% not having all their earlier expectations fulfilled.

The respondents in Electric and Automation Installer group mentioned a few issues that cause their expectations not been fulfilled. One respondent mentioned that he expected that contents in a course are explained both in Finnish and in English equally. This can be easily related to a comment given to the last question of the questionnaire.

Respondent mentioned that it's difficult to learn vocabulary in Finnish. It was also

mentioned that earlier expectations are not met because only some of the classes are in English, there's not enough work at times and that the class proceeds too slow.

Even though some respondents from the Practical Nursing said that their earlier expectations haven't been met they didn't have any specific issues to mention why it is so.

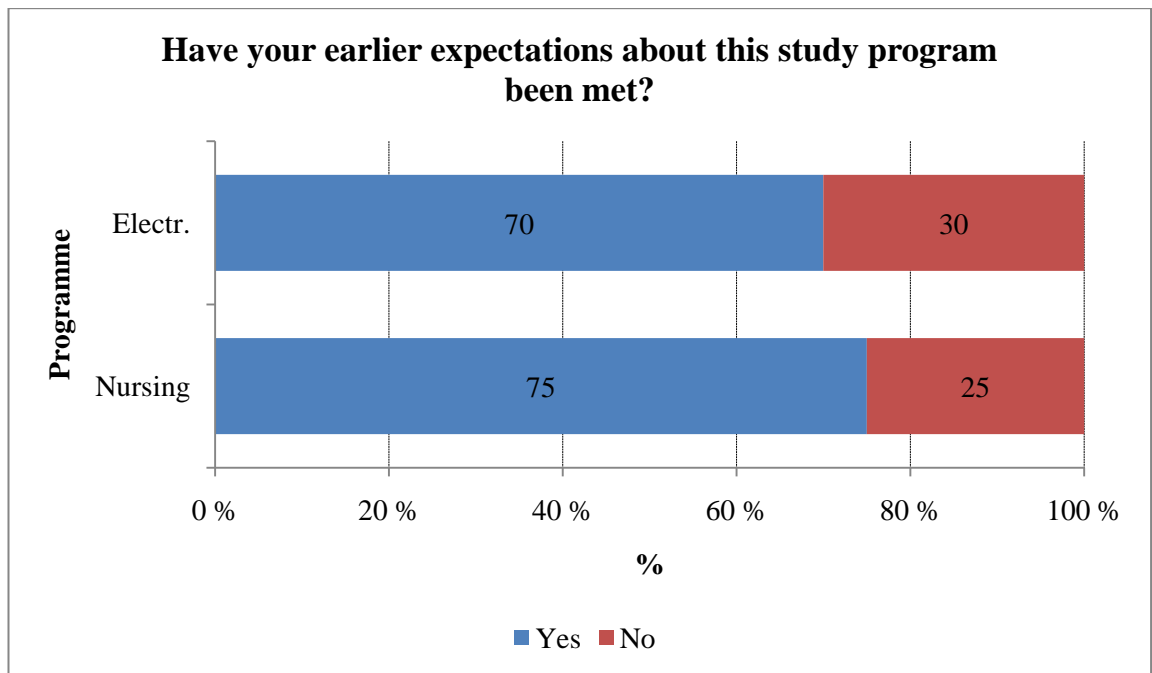


Chart 18. Earlier expectations.

## 4.5 Additional free-choice courses

As the respondents have VAP(free-choice)courses in their curriculum question number ten inquired if they would like to have some additional courses included and if they would what kind of courses. 70% of the respondents in Electrical and Automation Installers program were satisfied with the current free-choice courses when 30% had some requests for additions. Results are indicated in the chart 19 below.

In Practical Nursing program 62% didn't want any extra courses which mean that 38% of the respondents would like to have some additional free-choice courses.

There were quite a lot of recommendations for additional courses. In Electric and Automation Installers group a course about wind power automation was requested. There was also appetite to study Japanese language and extra courses about electronics were wished.

In Practical Nursing group music in general was wished for. There was also one more specific request that can be subcategorized to music in general; songs and rhymes in English for children. Additional other language courses were also hoped for.

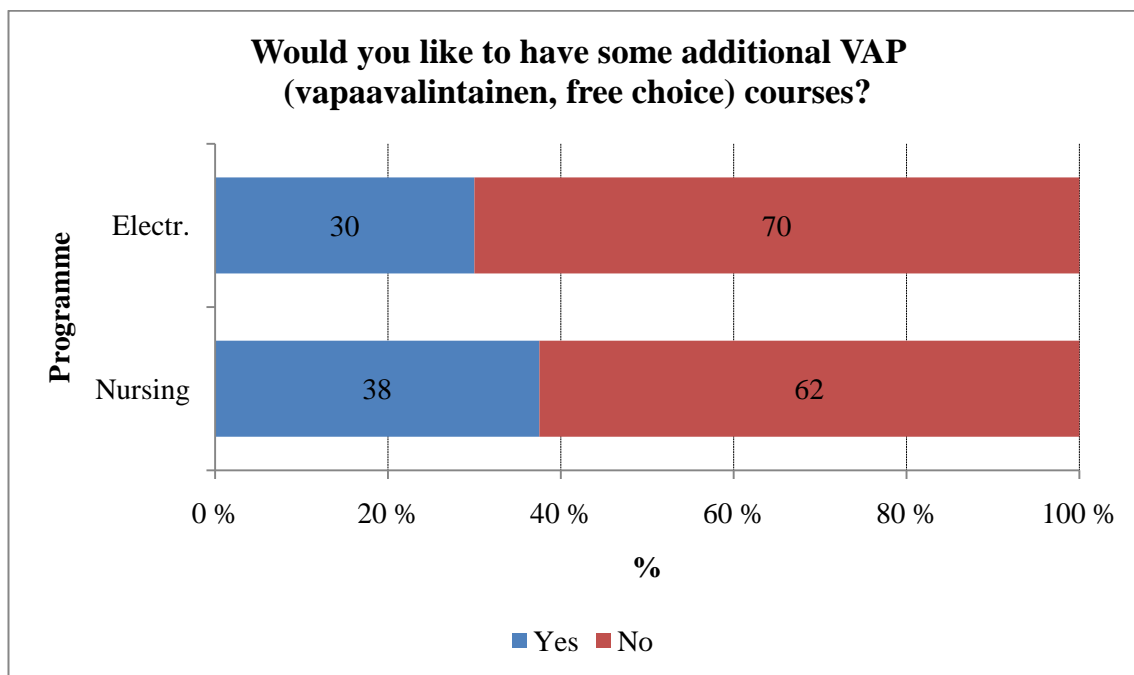


Chart 19. Free-Choice studies

## 4.6 Plans after graduating

The last “mark-with-an-X” question, question number 11 asked for the respondents plans after graduating. It was a multi-response question so the total of percentages is over 100%. There was a great variance in both of the programs although no respondent had other plans than included in the ready-made options.

70% of the respondents in Electrical and Automation Installer program announced that they plan to work abroad after getting their vocational qualification. 50% were going to get higher degree by continuing with studies and 40% planned to work in Finland. 20% announced that they plan to start their own business.

In Practical Nursing program 75% of the respondents were planning to work abroad, 38% to continue with studies and other 38% to work in Finland. 13% thought about setting up their own business. Results for the question are illustrated in the chart 20.

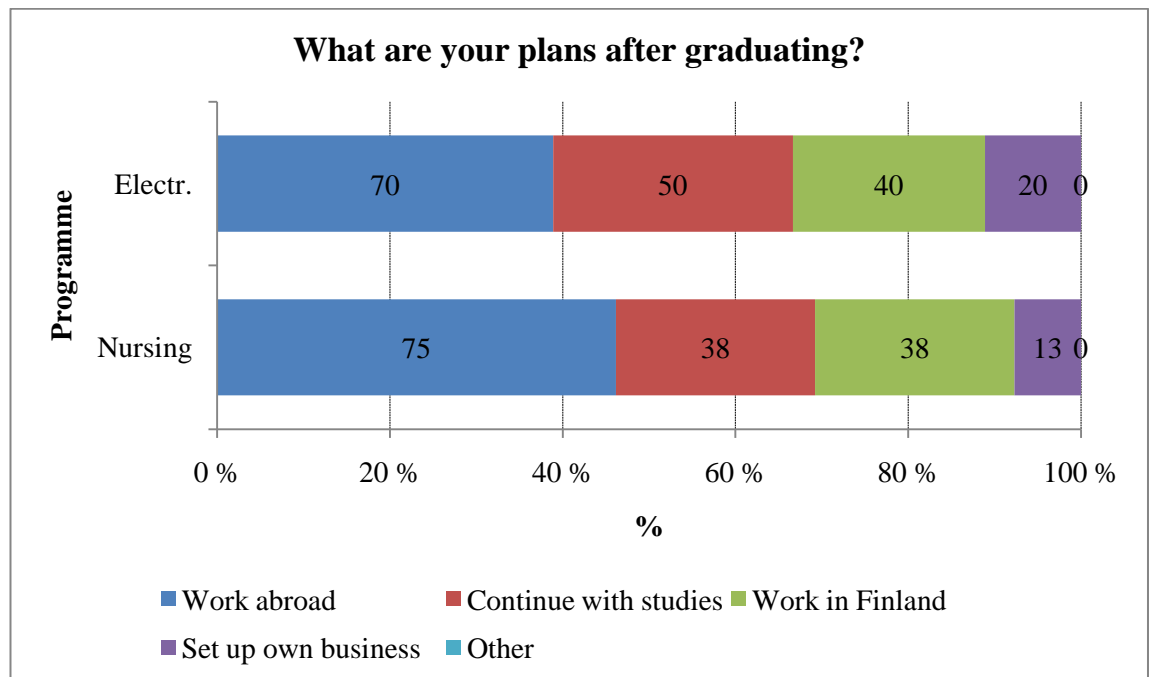


Chart 20. Plans after graduating.

## **4.7 Open-ended questions**

### **4.7.1 The best thing on studies so far**

Question number 12 asked for both the best and the worst thing in studies so far. Most of the respondents had something to answer in both parts of the question, and some of them even mentioned more than one thing.

In Electric and Automation Installers group all of the respondents had something to answer to this question. Some respondents mentioned that the subject is interesting, enjoyable to learn and that they like the subject in general. Meeting new people and getting new friends was also mentioned to be the best thing so far.

A few respondents answered more practical related matters to be the best thing. These answers included making team-work, practical working and building electronics. It was also mentioned that all of the courses are in time and that the “whole thing” referring to the program in general, is great.

The answers of the Practical Nursing group separated into three different categories. Approximately one third said that the greatest thing in studies is that they can study in English. There were answers such as “Get to know new things in English” and “Studying in English”.

The second part of the group praised the class spirit and new friends in general. This can be easily related to question number eight, statement six which asked about class spirit and got very positive feedback. For this “The best thing in studies so far, total of three respondents answered “Classmates”, “New friends” or “Our Class”.

The third category for answers was mentioning that the subject of studies is the best thing in their studies so far. Respondents said that skill labs and learning new things in the field of Practical Nursing is interesting.

### **4.7.2 The worst thing in studies so far**

Fewer respondents gave an answer to this part of the question than to the previous one. This clearly supports question number eight statement ten, general level of satisfaction which got really good grade in both of the groups.

In Electric and Automation Installers program the answers varied a lot. That's why the answers couldn't be categorized in any manner.

It was mentioned that the worst thing so far is "Language quagmire". It may be difficult to connect some terms and expressions as the teaching is both in Finnish and in English. This may cause misunderstandings and frustration among the students.

Other cons in studies so far included long schooldays and all excel/word exercises on computer. It was also mentioned that teaching could be faster paced. Other answers weren't really related to the program itself, those were more of personal matters as can be seen for the appendix part.

In Practical Nursing program respondents complained about books and standards in teaching. It was mentioned that there's not enough books in English available in the library for some of the subjects and some of the books available that are in English aren't "good" for studying.

When it comes to teaching standards, some of the respondents mentioned that there's too much homework and other work in general. It was also said that there's too high expectations in some subjects from the teachers side.



### **4.7.3 Additional comments and feedback**

The last question was number 13 that asked about additional comments and both positive and negative feedback. Not many respondents had anything to add here, four from Electric and Automation Installer program and only one from Practical Nursing.

One respondent in Electric and Automation Installers program mentioned that learning vocabulary in Finnish is difficult. Other negative comment stated that there's too much of sitting in front of a computer during classes. The other two answers praised the school and commented personal motivational factors.

In Practical Nursing the only additional comment mentioned that the program is good and well organized. All answers for the open-ended questions were listed and can be found from Appendix number

## 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the questionnaire survey the age distribution is rather high in both of the groups. The majority of the students belong to the age group of 16-18 or 25 and over. It was also noticed that several students do have some higher than compulsory school background education.

It seems that the greatest motive to study in either of the programs is indeed the possibility to study in English. The biggest factor behind this is the possibility for a better job prospects for the future as it's easier to work abroad also.

Majority of the students do not have problems with the teaching language. It seems that they have already acquired good basic skills in English/Finnish before applying for the programs. It's an important thing to be aware when for example planning courses and defining target market.

### 5.1 Improving the marketing

To be able to develop the marketing, the target market; a group of individuals with the same needs towards whom the marketing efforts are aimed at (Armstrong & Kotler), needs to be identified clearly. It can be recommended that Sedu would aim its marketing efforts also towards older people who already may have some higher level education, not only to students who have just qualified from compulsory school.

Most of the students found out about the program they are studying now from the Internet. It's a great media for this kind of advertisement since it's widely available and can be accessed at any time. Sedu should definitely continue and even improve its Internet based marketing.

Many students also found information from advertisements in newspapers or heard about the program for their previous guidance counselors. Newspapers that were mentioned, Ilkka and Pohjalainen, are ok mediums for advertisement even though the visibility for a rather small newspaper add may not be so great. As so many of the students heard about the program for a guidance counselor, Sedu should cooperate as

much as possible with the compulsory school nearby to get more visibility for the programs.

Quite a few students had found their way to their current study program by hearing it from their friends/acquaintances. The positive word-of-mouth advertisement can be increased by developing the programs in general so that the students that are currently in these programs will be satisfied and praise the programs to their friends.

## **5.2 Improving the programs**

In the question section eight respondents gave grades from 1-4 to the programs they are involved with. Overall these grades were really good as can be seen from the chart 21 below where all the averages are illustrated from both of the programs. Most of the statements received an average over 3 which is a very good score.

The highest score Sedu got from the level of teaching in Finnish which got excellent grade in both of the programs. If compared to the second statement; level of teaching in English, which got a slightly worse grade in Electric and Automation Installer program (in Practical Nursing both first and second statement got the same grade) it can be said that Sedu has several years of experience teaching in Finnish; teaching in English has just begun and is still in state of development.

Most of the remaining statements got fairly good grades, averages starting from 3, 1 and 3, 6. The two averages standing out are statements number eight and nine; the statement about materials handed out and the statement about the amount of information received how to interact with different cultures. In Electrical and Automation Installers program students were satisfied with the materials but in Practical Nursing the average score was 2,9; the second lowest in the whole questionnaire. Probably some improvement considering materials handed out could be made.

The statement saying “I have received enough information who to interact with different cultures got relatively low grade in both of the groups; 3, 0 in Electric and Automation Installers program and 2, 6 in Practical Nursing. It can be concluded that there should be more education about cultural differences since the total average was the lowest from the whole questionnaire. Being able to take cultural differences in consideration is vital

for the students as many of them will probably move abroad after getting their vocational qualification.

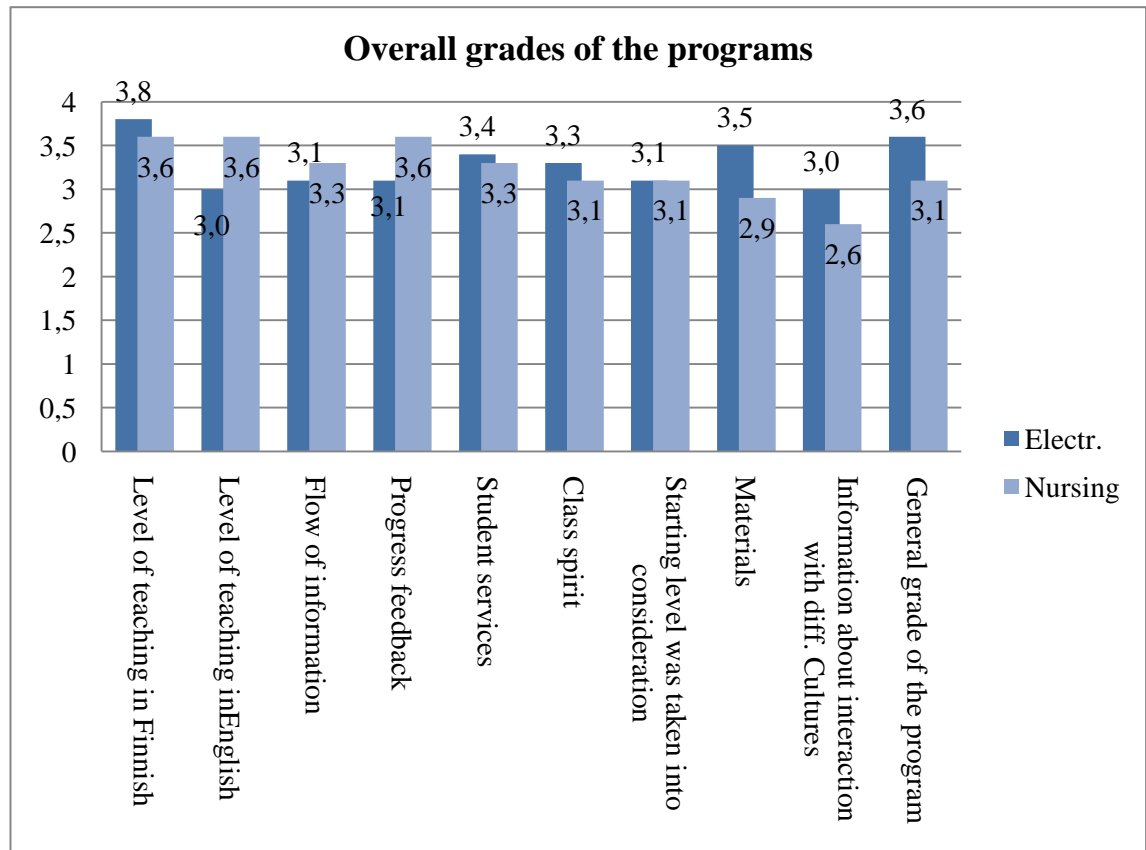


Chart 21. Overall grades.

### 5.3 Further research

Similar research like the one in hand could be conducted for every new class that starts in one of the two programs discussed in this paper. This way the satisfaction level could be determined for the new classes' right away. The results could also be compared to the previous years to see whether the overall satisfaction has increased or decreased. A standard questionnaire form could be created to keep the results actually easily comparable.

## 6 SUMMARY

This customer satisfaction research was done for the Vocational Education Centre Sedu as a final thesis project. Sedu had two new partially in English taught programs launched on August 2010; Electric and Automation Installation and Practical Nursing. The data was collected using a questionnaire that was handed out on November 2010. As both of the newly launched programs were running for the first time the school didn't have any previous databases about them. The goal of the research was to measure the current level of satisfaction and find out what would be the most suitable channel for marketing the programs. The results for the programs were analyzed individually due to several different variables programs have that would have altered the results.

The result for the customer satisfaction research at Sedu was positive. Students in both of the groups expressed that they are overall very happy with the contents of the programs as well as with the study related matters in general, however with a few exceptions. In Practical Nursing program the students weren't satisfied with the usefulness and understandability of some teaching materials handed out and students in both of the groups wished for more information about cultural differences.

The most effective marketing medium for the new programs seems to be the Internet. Most of the students found out about the programs from there. Internet is a great tool for marketing purposes since it is relatively cheap, widely available everywhere and popular amongst young people.

The questionnaire included a question about additional free-choice courses which spawned a few suggestions. In Electric and Automation Installer program the students requested for a courses about wind-power automation, extra course about electronics and Japanese language course. In Practical Nursing the requests contained music and songs as well as language courses in general.

Sedu should conduct a customer satisfaction research to all the new Electrical and Automation Installer and Practical Nursing classes. There could be a standard

questionnaire form to be used. This way the level of satisfaction could be measured on a regular basis and the results could be compared to previous years.

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## Appendix 1

### QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Mikko Niemi and I'm currently doing my final thesis for Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK).

The aim of this research is to find out how students feel about the two partially in English taught programs that have been launched this autumn at Sedu, and eventually give suggestions for development.

You will answer anonymously and the data gathered is used for this research only. Filling this form will take you maximum 10 minutes and I hope that you will answer with the uppermost honesty.

Thank you for your cooperation!

---

1) **Age:**    ☐ 16-18            ☐ 19-21            ☐ 22-24            ☐ 25+

2) **Prior education**

☐ Comprehensive school                      ☐ Upper secondary school    ☐ Vocational school

☐ Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

3) **Have you any earlier experience about the subject you are studying?**

☐ Yes, what kind? \_\_\_\_\_

☐ No

4) **From where did you find out about the program you are now studying?**

☐ From Internet                                      ☐ From a friend/acquaintance

☐ From an advertisement (magazine, flier, newspaper etc.), which one? \_\_\_\_\_

☐ From your previous schools guidance counselor

☐ From other source, where? \_\_\_\_\_

---

5) **What was the main reason for you to apply to your current study program?**

☐ Possibility to study in English                      ☐ Location of the school

☐ Better job prospects for the future    ☐ Interesting subject

☐ Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

6) How do you feel about the balance between English and Finnish taught lessons?

I'd like to have a few more lessons in English    I'd like to have a lot more lessons in English

I'd like to have a few more lessons in Finnish    I'd like to have a lot more lessons in Finnish

\_The current balance is good

7) Have you faced difficulties concerning studying in English?(tick as many as you like)

Yes, in this case, in which area(s)?

    No

## \_Grammar

## \_Vocabulary

## \_Listening comprehension

Reading comprehension

\_Writing

## \_Speaking

**If you ticked one or more, can you define more specific what kind of problems, in which occasions etc.**

--

**8) What do you think about your current study program?**

1=Totally disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Somewhat agree, 4=Totally agree

	1	2	3	4
Level of teaching in Finnish is good				
Level of teaching in English is good				
Flow of information is sufficient				
I get enough feedback about my progress				
Student services in general are well organized				
Our class spirit is good				
My starting level was adequately taken into consideration				
Materials handed out are useful and easily understandable				
I have received enough information how to interact with different cultures				
In general, I'm satisfied with my current study program				

**9) Have your earlier expectations about this study program been met?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

If No, Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**10) Would you like to have some additional VAP (vapaavalintainen, free choice) courses?**

☐ Yes, what kind? \_\_\_\_\_

☐ No

**11) What are your plans after graduating?**

☐ Work abroad

☐ Continue with studies

☐ Work in Finland

☐ Set up your own business

☐ Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

**12) What has been the best/worst thing on your studies so far?**

The best thing: \_\_\_\_\_

The worst thing: \_\_\_\_\_

**13) Additional comments and feedback**

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**Thanks again and good luck on your upcoming studies!**

## **Appendix 2**

### **Open-ended question answers**

#### **2. Prior education, other**

- Polytechnic
- University

#### **3. Earlier experience, what**

- Physics and mathematics
- Math, physics and chemistry
- Couple of month in the polytechnic
- Computers etc.

#### **4. Where found out**

- Pohjalainen
- Parents
- Ilkka

#### **9. Earlier expectations met?**

- Because I expected 50/50 English/Finnish explanations in class
- Only some of the courses are in English, also sometimes there's not enough work to do
- Too slow

#### **10. Additional VAP-courses**

- Tuulivoima automaatio (wind power automation)
- Japanese language course
- Extra electronics

#### **11. Plans after graduating, other**

- Find work or study anywhere in the world
- Not sure yet. I want to work but not sure where I end up

**12.1. Best thing in studies so far?**

- Studying something I like
- Getting new friends and improving my English with them
- All programs are in time
- Interesting
- Meeting new people and making team-work
- The whole thing
- Building electronics
- Practical working
- Schematic award
- The joy of learning new things

**12.2. Worst thing in studies so far?**

- Language quagmire
- I fell asleep in the class once
- Teaching is too slow, too slow!
- Nothing this far
- Waking up in the morning
- Long schooldays
- All excel/word things on computer
- I'm often late

**13. Additional comments and feedback**

- Just keeping up enthusiasm to the programme with loads of positiveness
- Difficulties learning vocabulary in Finnish
- Sometimes it's really boring to sit in front of computer all the time
- Good job

## **Practical Nursing**

### **2. Prior education, other**

-University of applied sciences

### **3. Earlier experience, what**

-On-job-learning period

### **4. Where found out**

-Flier

-Ilkka

### **10. Additional VAP-courses**

-Music would be nice

-Songs for children in English and rhymes etc. for children

-Other languages

### **12.1. Best thing in studies so far?**

-Studying in English

-Classmates

-Our class, English classes

-Get to know new things in English

-the subjects and learning new things, skill labs

-Language, subjects are interesting

-New friends

### **12.2. Worst thing in studies so far?**

-High expectations from the teacher's side

-Is I have to be away from classes many times

-Sitting in lessons, teachers give too much homework

-There's no books available in English for some subjects

-Sometimes too much work

-There's not good books in English

**13. Additional comments and feedback**

-Everything is good and organized